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The AI Race: A Tightrope Walk Between Innovation, Inclusivity and Prosperity for All

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SOUTH CENTRE

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SOUTH CENTRE

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ABSTRACT

The intensifying global race in Artificial Intelligence (AI) forces nations to walk a tightrope, balancing the drive for rapid innovation against the imperatives of fairness, safety and inclusivity. This tension is reflected in recent high-level international summits and the diverging regulatory paradigms emerging globally, most notably between the market-driven, largely deregulatory approach of the United States and the human-centric, risk-based model favoured by the European Union. Such divergence contributes to a fragmented governance landscape, posing significant challenges for developing countries, which face the risk of marginalisation due to disparities in infrastructure, resources, and technical capacity. Some of these countries have put in place proactive strategies as they endeavour to walk the tightrope between innovation and fairness in the unfolding AI era.

L'intensification de la course à l'intelligence artificielle à l'échelle mondiale oblige les États à marcher sur une corde raide et à trouver un équilibre entre la volonté d'innover rapidement et la nécessité de tenir compte des impératifs d'équité, de sécurité et d'inclusivité. Cette tension se reflète dans les récents sommets internationaux de haut niveau et les divergences dans les approches réglementaires adoptées par les États, les États-Unis privilégiant une approche fondée sur le marché et la déréglementation, le modèle promu par l'Union européenne étant quant à lui centré sur l'humain et la prise en compte des risques. Ces divergences contribuent à une fragmentation du paysage de la gouvernance, ce qui n'est pas sans poser de difficultés importantes pour les pays en développement, qui risquent d'être marginalisés en raison des disparités qui existent en matière d'infrastructures, de ressources et de capacités techniques. Certains de ces pays ont mis en place des stratégies dynamiques pour tenter de concilier innovation et équité à l'ère de l'IA.

La intensificación de la carrera mundial de la Inteligencia Artificial (IA) obliga a las naciones a caminar por la cuerda floja, equilibrando el impulso de la innovación rápida con los imperativos de equidad, seguridad e inclusión. Esta tensión se refleja en las recientes cumbres internacionales de alto nivel y en los divergentes paradigmas reguladores que están surgiendo en todo el mundo, sobre todo entre el enfoque de Estados Unidos, impulsado por el mercado y en gran medida desregulador, y el modelo centrado en el ser humano y basado en el riesgo que favorece la Unión Europea. Esta divergencia contribuye a fragmentar el panorama de la gobernanza y plantea importantes retos a los países en desarrollo, que corren el riesgo de quedar marginados debido a las disparidades en infraestructuras, recursos y capacidad técnica. Algunos de estos países han puesto en marcha estrategias proactivas en su esfuerzo por caminar por la cuerda floja entre la innovación y la equidad en la era de la IA.

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INTRODUCTION

The global race for dominance in Artificial Intelligence (AI) is intensifying, forcing nations to navigate a delicate balance between maximising innovation and ensuring fairness, safety and inclusivity. This delicate balancing act has been the central theme of a rapid succession of high-level international summits initiated in late 2023. Beginning with the United Kingdom-hosted AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, the initial focus cantered on identifying and mitigating the most significant risks posed by frontier AI, leading to the Bletchley Declaration's foundational call for AI to be "safe, (...) human-centric, trustworthy and responsible."

Building on this, the conversation evolved at the Seoul Summit in May 2024, shifting emphasis towards inclusivity and the critical need to prevent AI from exacerbating existing global inequalities while also exploring its potential to advance sustainable development. Most recently, the AI Action Summit in Paris in February 2025 aimed to translate these principles into concrete international actions that promote accessible, sustainable, and effectively governed AI, drawing a connection to the United Nations (UN)'s Summit of the Future.

However, these forums have not only highlighted shared goals but also thrown into sharp relief the fierce geopolitical competition for AI leadership and the emergence of divergent national strategies. The dynamism of local AI frameworks fosters an increasingly fragmented global governance landscape. It raises urgent questions about how the transformative power of AI can be steered towards collective benefit amid competing visions and how developing countries can navigate this complex environment.

Ensuring that AI becomes a tool for bridging, rather than widening, the global digital divide is paramount. This paper delves into the complex question of examining the diverging paradigms of AI governance, particularly contrasting the approaches of the United States and the European Union, and focusing also on the distinct challenges, perspectives, and proactive strategies emerging from some developing nations as they endeavour to walk the tightrope between innovation and fairness in the unfolding AI era. The paper concludes that navigating the AI era requires moving beyond geopolitical competition towards genuine international cooperation that fully integrates the priorities and contributions of developing countries into an AI framework that ultimately serves shared global prosperity and benefits all of humanity.

THE RECENT PARIS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACTION SUMMIT

The recent Paris Artificial Intelligence Action Summit served as a stark reminder of the global race unfolding in AI, digital innovation, and safety. It is part of various summits organised since 2023 to increase the global conversation on the safety and governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The inaugural AI Safety Summit, hosted by the United Kingdom at Bletchley Park in November 2023, focused on identifying and mitigating the most significant risks associated with frontier AI, including potential harm and misuse.[1] Countries participating in the first AI Safety Summit adopted the Bletchley Declaration, recognising that "AI should be designed, developed, deployed and used in a manner that is safe, (...) human-centric, trustworthy and responsible."[2] Countries that sign the Bletchley Declaration are also committed to identifying AI safety risks and developing policies across countries to ensure safety in light of these risks.[3]

Building upon this foundation, the second summit, held in Seoul in May 2024, shifted its emphasis towards AI inclusivity and the potential risk that AI could exacerbate existing inequalities.[4] The discussions centred on responsible AI development and deployment, aiming to ensure that AI benefits humanity and bridges the digital divides between and within countries, including by identifying practical applications of AI to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[5]

The Third Summit took place in February 2025 in Paris. Under the heading "AI Action Summit," the participating States aimed to build on previous international AI Summits and the decisions made during the United Nations Summit of the Future in 2024, promoting concrete initiatives to provide access to safe AI, develop environmentally friendly AI, and ensure effective global governance.[6]

The Summit aimed to promote inclusive and responsible AI development and deployment, as well as refine the global approach to AI governance, with a focus on establishing concrete international cooperation and regulatory mechanisms. Nonetheless, it demonstrated the fierce competition of global powers for AI dominance, clearly signalling the need for charting new mechanisms in the United Nations that could raise critical questions about the future of global innovation, the challenges faced by developing countries, and means to overcome the increasingly fragmented landscape of AI governance.

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[1] United Kingdom, Government of, "AI Safety Summit 2023". Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/ai-safety-summit-2023 (accessed 14.02.2025).
[2] The Bletchley Declaration by Countries Attending the AI Safety Summit, 1-2 November 2023 (updated 13.02.2025). Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-safety-summit-2023-the-bletchley-declaration/the-bletchley-declaration-by-countries-attending-the-ai-safety-summit-1-2-november-2023 (accessed 14.02.2025).
[3] *Ibid*.
[4] See: AI Seoul Summit, co-hosted by the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom, 21 – 22 May 2024, at https://aiseoulsummit.kr/aiss/ (accessed 17.02.2025).
[5] See: Seoul Declaration for Safe, Innovative and Inclusive AI by Participants Attending the Leaders' Session of the AI Seoul Summit (21st May 2024), para. 6 at https://aiseoulsummit.kr/press/?Uid=41&mod=document&pageid=1 (accessed 17.02.2025).
[6] See: Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet (11 February 2025).

DIVERGENT PARADIGMS IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GOVERNANCE: AN OCEAN APART

The contemporary global landscape of AI governance is characterised by a heterogeneous assemblage of competing strategic visions, policy frameworks, and underlying value systems. This divergence is particularly salient through a comparative analysis of the articulated approaches emanating from the United States and the European Union, two prominent actors competing for significant influence in the AI ecosystem. While both acknowledge the transformative potential of AI across diverse sectors, their respective policies on AI governance reveal fundamentally disparate normative orientations. The core of this dichotomy in governance approaches lies in the objectives they pursue, particularly a market-driven approach focused on innovation and profitability in the United States, and a more nuanced and human-centric approach by the European Union.[7]

During the Paris Summit, the United States Vice President, Mr J.D. Vance, refrained from focusing on the safety of AI, highlighting the need to promote technological dynamism and AI opportunities. For Vice President Vance, AI technologies "have countless, revolutionary applications in economic innovation, job creation, national security, health care, free expression, and beyond. And to restrict its development now would not only unfairly benefit incumbents in the space, it would mean paralysing one of the most promising technologies we have seen in generations."[8] It messages the proactive and predominantly deregulatory posture of the United States towards AI regulation, in particular considering that in his view the "excessive regulation of the AI sector could kill a transformative industry just as it's taking off, and we'll make every effort to encourage pro-growth AI policies."[9] In his speech, Vice President Vance characterised regulation as a threat to nascent innovation and expressed scepticism regarding the governmental capacity to effectively manage or guide technological progress without unduly constraining its inherent dynamism.

On the other hand, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, acknowledged the imperative of remaining competitive in the international AI race and for Europe to emerge as a "leading AI continent."[10] Mrs. von der Leyen explained that Europe is not late to the AI race, given that the "AI race is far from over." Moreover, the President of the European Commission mentioned that the role of Europe is to bring "AI to industry-specific applications and harnessing its power for productivity and people. This is where Europe can truly lead the race. So, Europe has everything to gain."[11] This strategic posture aligns with the EU's embedded commitment to a social market economy model and a new paradigm of global influence, particularly by promoting a normatively distinct "European brand" of AI development within the international arena.

Comparatively different from these positions, Indian Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi recognised the broader challenges and opportunities arising from AI development. Prime Minister Modi stressed the urgent need for "collective global efforts to establish governance

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[7] See: Anu Bradford, *Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology,* Kindle Edition (Oxford, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2023).
[8] J.D. Vance, Remarks by the Vice President at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris, France, The American Presidency Project*,* 11 February 2025. Available from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-vice-president-the-artificial-intelligence-action-summit-paris-france (accessed 25.03.2025).
[9] *Ibid*.
[10] Ursula von der Leyen, Speech by President von der Leyen at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit, Paris, 11 February 2025. Available from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_25_471 (accessed 25.03.2025).
[11] *Ibid.*

and standards that uphold our shared values, address risks, and build trust,"[12] mainly to ensure that the benefits of AI are accessible to all, especially in regions where "capacities are most lacking - be it compute power, talent, data, or the financial resources,"[13] highlighting the critical need for equitable access and capacity building across the Global South.

Prime Minister Modi recognised the need to develop "open-source systems that enhance trust and transparency … quality data sets, free from biases," and "people-centric applications" to ensure its positive impact on sectors like health, education, and agriculture. He emphasised on the need to tailor AI solutions to the specific needs and contexts of developing countries, promoting "technology rooted in local ecosystems" and the sharing of "experience and expertise." Finally, Prime Minister Modi emphasised the human responsibility in guiding AI's development, warning against fears of machine superiority, recalling that “no one holds the key to our collective future and shared destiny other than us humans.”[14]

[12] See: Narendra Modi, Opening Address by Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi at the AI Action Summit, Paris (11 February 2025) at https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?Dtl/39020/Opening_Address_by_Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modi_at_the_AI_Action_Summit_Paris_February_11_2025 (accessed 25.03.2025).
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*

UNESCO'S GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR AI ETHICS

In November 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s 193 Member States adopted the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (the Recommendation).[15] This initiative defines AI ethics as a "systematic normative reflection" grounded in human dignity and rights. While its unanimous adoption signalled consensus on the need for such a framework, its voluntary "Recommendation" status means implementation relies on normative influence rather than legal enforcement, especially as "commonly agreed" practical application remains a pursuit amidst diverging national approaches.

The Recommendation is founded on four core values: human rights and dignity; environmental flourishing; diversity and inclusiveness; and peaceful, just, interconnected societies. These underpin ten principles, including proportionality, safety, fairness, sustainability, privacy, human oversight, transparency, accountability, awareness, and multi-stakeholder governance.

UNESCO focuses its policy actions to foster a comprehensive and preventative ethical framework, rather than a purely reactive one. The areas of policy action identified by the Recommendation try to address the multifaceted societal impact of AI, moving beyond technical fixes to encompass structural and systemic considerations.

Policy areas such as Ethical Impact Assessment and ethical governance and stewardship act as foundational pillars, mandating proactive risk evaluation and multi-stakeholder oversight to embed ethical considerations from the outset of AI development and deployment. This is complemented by data policy actions that recognise data as a critical and sensitive enabler of AI, necessitating robust protection and equitable access.

Furthermore, the policy areas addressing specific sectors like education, culture, health, and the economy reflect an understanding that AI's ethical implications are context-dependent and require tailored multisectoral governance. This require strengthening international cooperation towards the adoption of harmonized ethical standards to prevent a 'race to the bottom' and promote globally beneficial AI.

UNESCO's Recommendation has established a global normative foundation on addressing the ethical implications of AI. Nevertheless, divergences in national priorities and the instrument's voluntary nature present persistent hurdles. As confirmed by the analysis made below, efforts of international organisations, such as those of UNESCO have not been yet able to provide a commonly agreed international framework that accommodates different national/regional priorities and perspectives on AI generation and deployment.

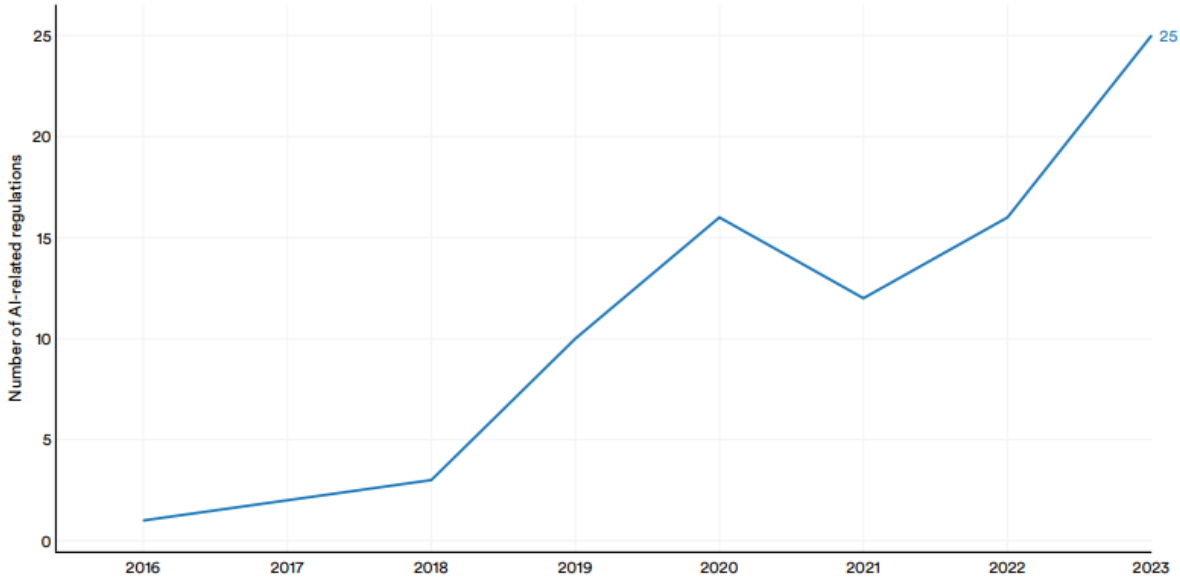
[15] See: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: The Recommendation” at https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics.

THE UNITED STATES' APPROACH TO REGULATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The United States' approach to digital regulation is deeply rooted in a techno-libertarian ethos, prioritising market-driven solutions and minimising government intervention.[16] This approach relies on trust in tech companies to self-regulate, aiming to foster private-sector innovation, with government involvement primarily limited to national security and cybersecurity. Although the number of AI-related policies in the United States has increased in recent years (see Figure 1), a comprehensive federal law remains absent, and current policies have weakened or revoked existent legislation.[17] This environment has raised concerns about the unchecked power of tech giants and potential social harms as well as about challenges to fair competition and innovation.[18]

Historically, *laissez-faire* economics and limited government have drawn support from both the political left, emphasising individual freedom, and the right, advocating for the free market and profit-related incentives. However, the rapid evolution of technology poses significant regulatory challenges, necessitating government intervention to mitigate the risks associated with the use of AI. For example, AI raises significant human rights concerns, particularly regarding the potential for AI to be used in ways that infringe on fundamental freedoms, including the global sourcing of AI's raw materials, geopolitical competition, and the potential harm posed by autonomous weapons systems.[19]

Figure 1.- Number of AI-related regulations in the United States, 2016 – 2023



Source: AI Index, 2024

The Executive Order 14110 on "Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence", issued in 2023 by the Biden Administration, outlined a comprehensive, government-wide strategy for managing the development and deployment of AI, including

[16] See: Bradford, *Digital Empires*, p. 33.
[17] See: United States of America, Office of the President (The White House), Executive Order 14179, Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence (23 January 2025).
[18] Antoine Michon and Paul-Adrien Hyppolite, *Big Tech Dominance (1): The New Financial Tycoons*, Fondation pour l'innovation politique, December 2018. Available from https://www.fondapol.org/en/study/big-tech-dominance-1-the-new-financial-tycoons/ (accessed 25.03.2025).
[19] See: United Nations News, "'Irrefutable' need for global regulation of AI: UN experts", 19 September 2024 at https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1154541 (accessed 25.03.2025).

various actions across federal agencies, such as developing AI safety guidelines, promoting AI innovation and competition, addressing AI's impact on the workforce, ensuring equitable AI application, protecting consumer rights, safeguarding privacy, and enhancing federal AI capabilities. However, it was revoked in January 2025 by President Trump's Executive Order 14179 on "Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence."

The Executive Order 14179 mandates a review of existing AI regulations to ensure a policy environment that supports innovation and maintains the nation's competitive edge. It articulates a vision for AI development that prioritises economic competitiveness and national security while also seeking to cultivate an environment conducive to free-market principles through the deregulation of the AI regime. The United States' approach to technology has historically favoured a self-regulatory approach; for example, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act shields online platforms from liability for user-generated content. This framework provides considerable flexibility for companies like YouTube and Meta, allowing them to moderate or remove content without infringing on free speech rights.[20] While some targeted regulations, such as the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), exist, they often incorporate elements of industry self-regulation.[21]

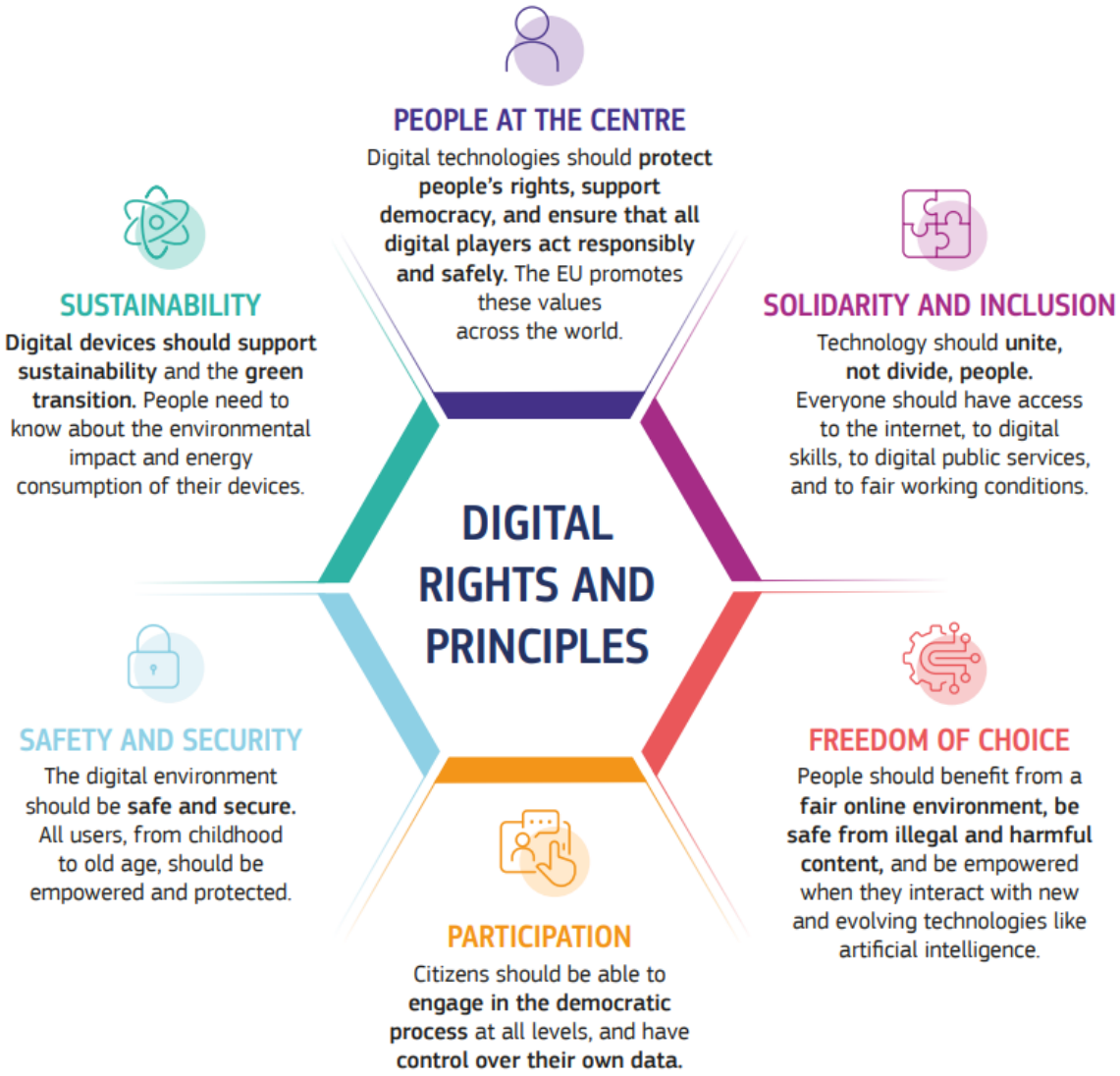
The absence of comprehensive federal privacy laws, updated antitrust statutes, and specific regulations for emerging technologies like AI and the gig economy, have resulted in a landscape where a few large tech companies hold significant influence and power in shaping the framework in which they operate and in the market.[22] Vice-President J.D. Vance emphasised this "hands-off" approach at the Paris AI summit, where he focused on innovation and deregulation as key to AI leadership. Vance's position, reflecting a broader US inclination, prioritises minimising government intervention with the goal of promoting innovation. This approach also allows US tech companies to set the rules for developing and deploying AI in line with their own commercial interests.

[20] See: Emily Bazelon, "How to Unmask the Internet's Vilest Characters", *New York Times Magazine* (22 April 2011) at https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/24/magazine/mag-24lede-t.html (accessed 25.03.2025).
[21] Bradford, *Digital Empires.*
[22] Investigation of Competition in Digital Markets, Majority Staff Report and Recommendations, Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, 117th Cong, 2d Sess, CP 117–8, Part I (published July 2022), p. 110.

THE EUROPEAN UNION REGULATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In contrast to the United States, the European Union (EU) has carved out a distinct regulatory approach regarding AI and digital innovation. The EU has prioritised a human-centric approach, placing the protection of individual and social welfare at the forefront of its digital policy. The European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade explicitly positions "people at the centre" of digital transformation.[23] This declaration advocates for a digital transformation that benefits all, upholding fundamental rights and democratic values, and reflects on sustainability, solidarity and inclusion within the European Union (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.- Elements of EU's Digital Rights and Principles Declaration

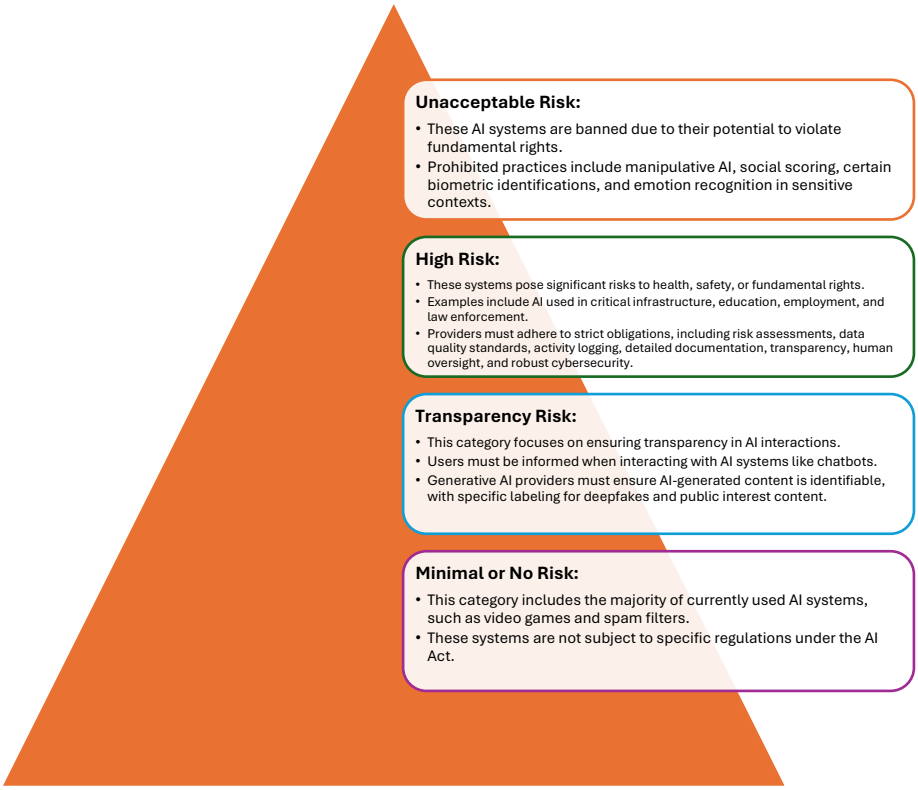


Source: Living-in.EU (2025)

[23] See: European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, European Union, document 2023/C 23/01 at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?Uri=CELEX:32023C0123(01) (accessed 25.03.2025).

The people at the centre approach permeates the EU's policymaking, shaping how tech companies operate within its borders. It influenced the design of key regulatory instruments for the collection, processing, and sharing of data, as well as the design of digital products and the interactions between users and businesses. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a prime example, imposing obligations on data processing that include adherence to principles of lawfulness, fairness, and transparency, while granting individuals rights such as the "right to be forgotten."[24] In addition, the EU has adopted the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act), which applies a risk-based approach, categorising AI applications and imposing corresponding regulatory obligations based on the risk that such technology represents. The EU's AI Act categorises AI systems into four risk levels, each with corresponding regulations (see Figure 3).[25]

Figure 3.- Risk-based Approach in the Artificial Intelligence Act



Source: Artificial Intelligence Act

Under the AI Act, providers of high-risk AI systems are subject to higher compliance requirements to ensure their products are safe, ethical, and transparent before being released to the market. The transparency risk category requires businesses to prioritise clear disclosure and labelling, particularly for chatbots and generative AI content, to ensure users are aware of AI involvement and to prevent deception. This translates into the design of user interfaces with explicit AI identification and the implementation of robust labelling mechanisms for AI-

[24] Art. 17 of the General Data Protection Regulation, Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) [2016] OJ L 119/1.
[25] European Commission, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Laying Down Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and Amending Certain Union Legislative Acts, (COM(2021) 206 final).

generated outputs, which impacts content moderation and carries legal and reputational implications for non-compliance.

The minimal- or no-risk category enables continued innovation with a reduced regulatory burden, thereby fostering a competitive AI landscape for applications such as spam filters and recommendation systems. While these systems face fewer restrictions, ethical considerations and existing consumer protection laws still apply. Ultimately, the AI Act aims to strike a balance between innovation and user protection, necessitating ongoing monitoring as the lines between risk categories become increasingly blurred due to the constant evolution of AI technology.

However, the EU's regulatory landscape is undergoing a notable shift. At the Paris AI Summit, President Macron, while reaffirming the European Union's commitment to AI serving humanity, also emphasised the need to foster innovation and competition and made a call to “simplify regulation, deepen European markets and invest in calculation capacities.”[26] He cautioned against overly restrictive rules that could impede technological advancement, advocating for a more nuanced and balanced approach. Similarly, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, has recently signalled a willingness to recalibrate existing EU regulations to stimulate innovation and enhance competitiveness.[27] This evolving stance reflects a growing tension in balancing the need to innovate in AI development and to remain competitive with the need to protect human rights.[28]

[26] Clea Caulcutt, "Plug, baby, plug': Macron pushes for French nuclear-powered AI”, *Politico*, 10 February 2025. Available from https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-answer-donald-trump-fossil-fuel-drive-artificial-intelligence-ai-action-summit/ (accessed 28.03.2025).
[27] Speech by President von der Leyen at the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit
[28] Bradford, *Digital Empires*, p. 105.

THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT AND THE GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON AI GOVERNANCE

During the AI Action Summit in Paris, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised the critical need for global solidarity in addressing the challenges arising from AI, particularly regarding the digital divide.[29] He highlighted the stark reality that "the power of AI carries immense responsibilities. Today, that power sits in the hands of a few. While some companies and some countries are racing ahead with record investments, most developing nations find themselves left out in the cold."[30] For the Secretary-General, this disparity risks deepening geopolitical divides, necessitating urgent action to ensure that AI benefits all of humanity, not just a select few.

The Secretary-General also emphasised the UN's role in providing an inclusive platform for AI solidarity, notably through the Global Digital Compact and the establishment of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and Global Dialogue on AI Governance (see Box 1).[31] The Secretary-General recalled that "Member States also agreed to establish a Global Dialogue on AI Governance – within the United Nations – to ensure that all countries have a voice in shaping the future of AI."[32] According to the Secretary-General, this platform is crucial for developing countries, as it provides a space for them to participate in shaping the global AI landscape rather than being passive recipients of technological advancements.

Box 1.- Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and Global Dialogue on AI Governance (Zero Draft)[33]

The zero draft on "**Terms of Reference and Modalities for the Establishment and Functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance**" outlines the establishment of two key mechanisms for global AI governance as included in the Global Digital Compact: the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance.

The Panel is designed to provide authoritative, multidisciplinary scientific assessments of AI, focusing on its opportunities, risks, capabilities, and impacts. The Global Dialogue, conversely, is envisioned as an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform for facilitating open, transparent, and inclusive discussions on AI governance, with a strong emphasis on capacity building and international cooperation.

Composition and Mandates:

Independent International Scientific Panel on AI:

[29] António Guterres, Secretary-General's remarks at AI Action Summit, United Nations, 11 February 2025. Available from https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2025-02-11/secretary-generals-remarks-ai-action-summit-scroll-down-for-all-english-version#:~:text=We%20must%20prevent%20a%20world,and%20%22have%2Dnots%22.&text=We%20must%20all%20work%20together,sustainable%20development%20%E2%80%93%20not%20entrench%20inequalities (accessed 28.03.2025).
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] United Nations, Global Digital Compact, UN Doc. A/79/L.2 (2024), para. 56. Available from https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/L.2.
[32] Guterres, Secretary-General's remarks at AI Action Summit.
[33] United Nations, Terms of Reference and Modalities for the Establishment and Functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance: zero draft, UN Doc A/79/L.2 (19 March 2025). Available from https://www.un.org/global-digital-compact/sites/default/files/2025-03/ai_panel_and_dialogue_zero_draft_19_march_2025.pdf (accessed 28.03.2025).

Comprised of two committees:

Expert Committee: 20 members appointed by the Secretary-General, chosen for their expertise, multidisciplinary representation, and geographical/gender balance. Initial appointments are for two years to ensure staggered appointments.

Advisory Committee: 40 members elected by the General Assembly, with seats equally distributed among regional groups, ensuring broader representation.

Mandate:

- Provide independent, evidence-based scientific assessments.
- Analyse AI's opportunities, risks, capabilities, and impacts.
- Identify capacity-building gaps and model biases.
- Produce timely reports, including annual syntheses of AI research.
- Oversee all outputs from the panel.

Global Dialogue on AI Governance:

An intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform.

- Open to all Member States, observers, and relevant stakeholders.
- Annual meetings with plenary and thematic discussions, including a high-level segment.
- Co-Chaired by one representative from a developing and one from a developed nation.
- The panel will present its findings to the dialogue.
- Secretariat support from the UN system.

Mandate:

- Facilitate international cooperation on AI governance.
- Share best practices, lessons learned, and capacity-building programs.
- Identify AI's contributions to the SDGs and human rights.
- Encourage dialogue and foster interoperability.

Implications for Developing Countries:

The structure of both the Panel and the Dialogue aims to ensure that developing countries have a participation in global AI governance. The regional representation in the advisory committee and the co-chairing mechanism must be preserved and strengthened to ensure that the perspectives of developing countries are adequately identified and addressed. The Panel's focus on capacity-building gaps and model biases is also crucial, as these issues disproportionately affect developing countries.

The effectiveness of these mechanisms will depend on:

- Ensuring that developing countries have the resources and expertise to participate meaningfully.
- Translating the Panel's findings and the Dialogue's discussions into concrete actions.
- Securing adequate funding for capacity-building initiatives in developing countries.

The Global Dialogue on AI Governance aims to facilitate these efforts, enabling developing nations to leverage AI for sustainable development and bridge the digital divide. As Guterres concluded, "Let us move for an AI that is shaped by all of humanity, for all of humanity. In other words, let's make sure we are ready for the future… right now."[34]

[34] Guterres, Secretary-General's remarks at AI Action Summit.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' APPROACH TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GOVERNANCE

The challenges faced by developing countries underscore a critical need for inclusive and equitable global digital frameworks. Given the challenges that developing countries face in digital infrastructure, securing financial resources, and managing data, they can effectively participate in and benefit from the rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and related digital technologies. This disparity is a central concern for the Group of 77 and China (G77 and China), which has emphasised the need to establish an intergovernmental structure for proposed AI governance mechanisms, ensuring equitable global representation and a balance between political legitimacy and scientific credibility.[35]

The Prime Minister of India emphasised at the Paris Summit the importance of international cooperation to ensure that AI serves as a tool for inclusive growth and development and stressed the need for technology transfer, capacity building, and financial assistance to help developing countries navigate the complexities of AI.[36] This objective has also been included in the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution A/78/311 on "Enhancing international cooperation on capacity-building of Artificial Intelligence," which calls for the establishment of a robust framework for global AI collaboration. The resolution advocates for a human-centred approach and acknowledges the disparities between developed and developing countries; it also recognises that practical challenges such as divergent national interests, resource disparities, rapid technological change, and ethical and cultural differences could limit its efficiency.[37] Achieving this objective requires a concerted effort from UN member states to engage actively in international cooperation, prioritise AI capacity-building, and adopt practical, inclusive measures that recognise and address the varying levels of development across nations.[38]

The G77 and China have considered the need to establish a multi-tiered governance structure with clearly defined roles for member states and scientific experts, stressing transparency and inclusivity in the selection process, and proposed a two-track approach for the Global Dialogue: an intergovernmental track for regulatory approaches and governance standard-setting, and a multistakeholder track for technical and ethical discussions.[39] Similarly, they have questioned the idea of combining the Global Dialogue on AI Governance with existing meetings and fora, arguing for a unique platform to discuss AI governance relevant to sustainable development.

Developing countries should clarify their approaches to AI governance to be able to inform the development of global frameworks. For example, the African Union's Data Policy Framework[40]

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[35] Statement on Behalf of the Group of 77 and China by the Delegation of Iraq during the Consultations to Identify the Terms of Reference and Modalities for the Establishment and Functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, New York, 14 March 2025. Available from https://www.g77.org/statement/getstatement.php?id=250314 (accessed 28.03.2025).
[36] Modi, Opening Address by Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi at the AI Action Summit.
[37] See: Carlos M. Correa, "The United Nations Call to Enhance International Cooperation for Capacity-Building on Artificial Intelligence", *SouthViews* No. 273, 22 August 2024 (Geneva, South Centre) at https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/SV273_240822.pdf (accessed 28.03.2025).
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] See Statement on Behalf of the Group of 77 and China by the Delegation of Iraq during the Consultations to Identify the Terms of Reference and Modalities for the Establishment and Functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence.
[40] African Union, AU Data Policy Framework, endorsed by Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.1144(XL) (2-3 February 2022). Available from https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42078-doc-DATA-POLICY-FRAMEWORKS-2024-ENG-V2.pdf (accessed 28.03.2025).

and the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy[41] contain some elements in this regard and make it clear that the full realisation of the benefits that AI may generate for those countries depends on implementing robust policy frameworks addressing critical infrastructure gaps. Notably Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) could "build foundational systems to connect more businesses, improve government public services delivery, and promote inclusive access to and use of digital and AI services", but it will require the establishment of secure, interoperable, replicable, and open systems for deploying digital solutions at scale, enabling the delivery of public services and promoting inclusive access to digital and AI services.[42]

[41] African Union, Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy: Harnessing AI for Africa's Development and Prosperity (Accra, 2024*)*. Available from https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44004-doc-EN-_Continental_AI_Strategy_July_2024.pdf (accessed 28.03.2025).

[42] Rob Floyd, Freda Yawson, and Blaise Bayuo, "Digital public infrastructure (DPI) will drive AI for Africa's economic transformation," Africa Centre for Economic Transformation, 11 February 2025. Available from https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/insights-ideas/digital-public-infrastructure-dpi-will-drive-ai-for-africas-economic-transformation/.

THE AFRICAN UNION CONTINENTAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE STRATEGY

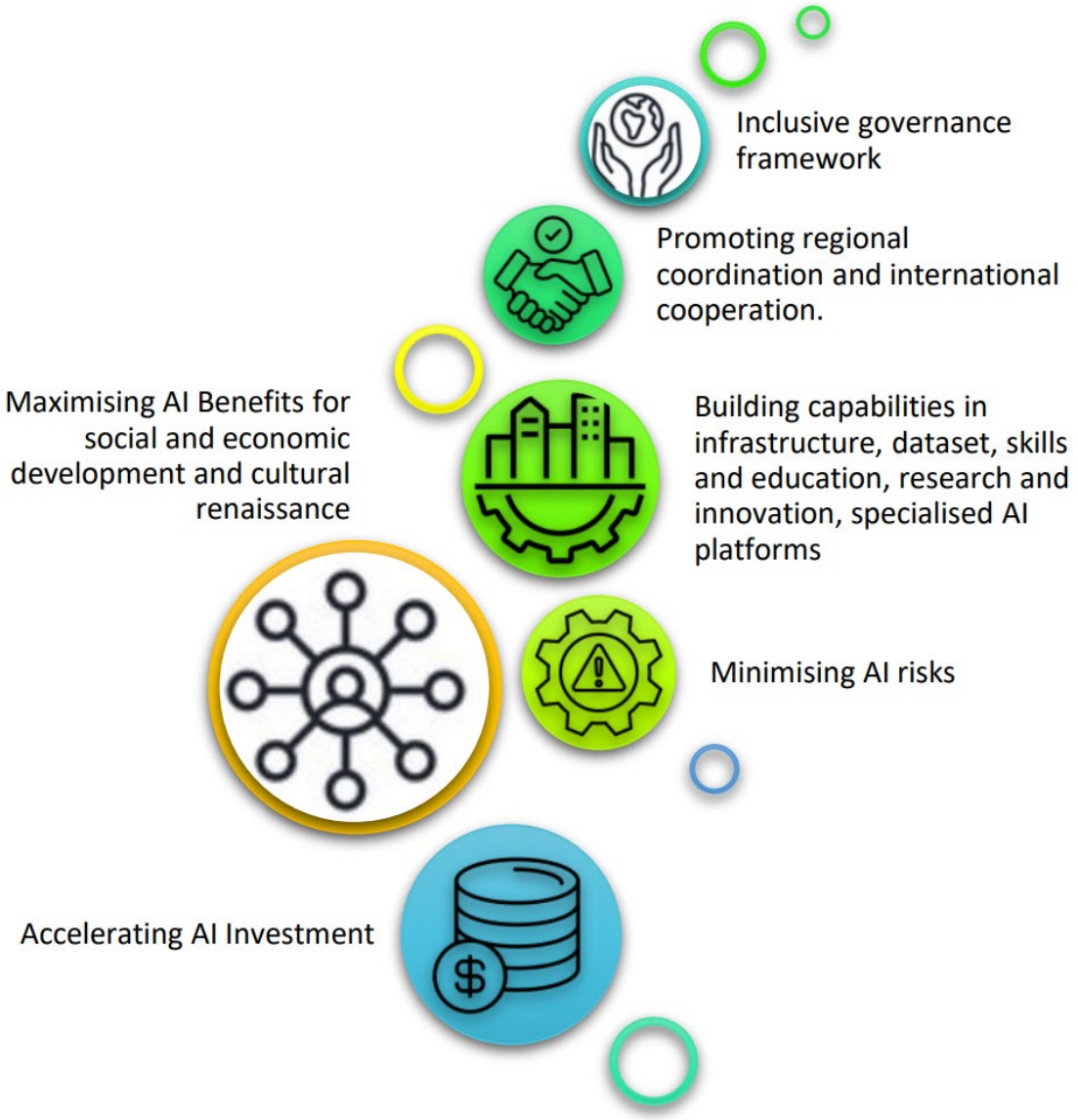
The African Union (AU) Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy ('the Strategy') considers the need to integrate AI tools through the promotion of DPI, facilitating applications such as continent-wide digital identity systems, AI-enabled anti-money laundering regimes, and AI-driven green industrial transformation. The Strategy reinforces these points, emphasising the need to strengthen infrastructure and policy development, ethical AI deployment, data protection, cybersecurity, and capacity building.

Part of this process involves accelerating investment in DPI, harmonising AI policies, developing context-specific legal frameworks, and integrating resilience into digital infrastructure planning. According to the Strategy, African countries should align their efforts with frameworks that will foster public-private partnerships and prioritise long-term sustainability and resilience. The Strategy considers a set of guiding principles focused on promoting a 'Local First' approach, emphasising the development and deployment of AI solutions that directly address the continent's challenges and priorities.

In addition, it encompasses a 'People-centred' approach that ensures AI's role in promoting inclusive growth, sustainable development, and the well-being of all Africans, particularly those in rural and remote areas. This principle also includes the commitment to 'Human Rights and Human Dignity,' which should permeate the AI systems, and upholds gender equality and human rights. Furthermore, AI should be conceived as a tool for fostering 'Peace and Prosperity,' contributing to secure and environmentally conscious African societies, which also encompass 'Inclusion and Diversity' towards the development of AI that is non-discriminatory and reflective of Africa's rich cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Strategy also develops the concept of responsible AI adoption through 'Ethics and Transparency' requiring guidelines that mitigate bias, inequality, and cultural erosion. It promotes regional 'Cooperation and Integration' driving regional collaboration, fostering the development of robust AI ecosystems and enabling effective data governance. Finally, 'Skills Development, Public Awareness, and Education' highlights the importance of equipping the African population with the necessary AI literacy and skills for digital transformation in the Strategy's focus areas (see Figure 4).

Figure 4.- AU Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy Focus Areas



Source: AU Continental AI Strategy

BRAZIL'S ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACT

In 2024, the Brazilian Senate approved Bill No. 2338/2023,[43] which establishes rules for the development and use of AI in Brazil. The Bill, which still requires approval by the Chamber of Deputies, establishes operational guidelines, requirements, and penalties for AI systems. The Bill considers a risk-based approach, regulating high-risk developments, as well as a rights-based framework. The Bill establishes foundational principles and operational guidelines for AI systems within Brazil. Article 2 outlines core values, emphasising a human-centred approach and respect for human rights and democratic values. Article 3 recognises the need for AI development to be conducive to inclusive growth, non-discrimination, transparency, and risk mitigation, among others (see Box 2).

Box 2.- Principles and Values established in Bill No. 2338/2023

The Brazilian AI Act (PL 2338/2023) outlines the foundational principles and operational guidelines for the development, implementation, and usage of artificial intelligence systems within Brazil. Specifically:

Article 2: Establishes the core values underpinning AI activities:

- Human-centred approach.
- Adherence to human rights and democratic values.
- Individual personality development.
- Environmental protection and sustainable development.
- Equality, non-discrimination, pluralism, and labour rights.
- Technological development and innovation.
- Free enterprise, competition, and consumer protection.
- Privacy, data protection, and the right to data self-determination.
- Research and development promotion.
- Information access, education, and public awareness.

Article 3: Details the principles of good faith that must guide AI development and implementation, including:

- Inclusive growth, sustainable development, and well-being.
- Self-determination and freedom of choice.
- Human participation and effective oversight.
- Non-discrimination, justice, equity, and inclusion.
- Transparency, explainability, intelligibility, and auditability.
- Reliability, robustness, and information security.
- Due process, contestability, and adversarial proceedings.
- Traceability for accountability.
- Accountability, responsibility, and damage reparations.
- Systemic risk prevention and mitigation.
- Non-maleficence and proportionality.

Additionally, the Brazilian AI Act defines an artificial intelligence system as a computational entity with varying autonomy, engineered to infer objective-achieving methodologies through machine learning, logic, and knowledge representation. According to the Bill, AI requires the input of machines or human-originated data to generate predictions, recommendations, or decisions that can impact both virtual and real-world environments. The recognition of the

[43] Projeto de Lei nº 2338/2023, Senado Federal, 3 de maio de 2023.

impact that AI can have on outcomes that influence both tangible and intangible spaces is an implicit acknowledgment of the need for a regulatory framework that addresses the diverse risks associated with AI deployment and application.

The Bill requires AI systems to be fair, transparent, and understandable, aligning with Brazil's General Data Protection Law (LGPD), which mandates that AI systems processing personal data comply with LGPD principles, including consent, purpose limitation, data minimisation, and security. The objective is to ensure that AI development and deployment respect individual privacy and data rights, creating a synergistic regulatory framework that safeguards individuals within the context of AI applications. The Bill has a strong emphasis on individual rights when interacting with AI. In principle, individuals are entitled to know how they interact with AI, to receive clear explanations for AI-driven decisions, and to challenge decisions that significantly impact their lives. It is also recognised that users are entitled to meaningful human involvement in AI decision-making, protection from discriminatory practices, and the safeguarding of their personal data.

The proposed legislation requires AI operators to facilitate individuals' understanding and exercise of their rights, and it provides pathways for individuals to seek justice through administrative and legal channels. To ensure transparency and accountability, individuals can request detailed information about how AI decisions are made, the system's reasoning, data sources, and appeal processes, including the possibility of challenging AI decisions that have legal weight or significantly impact a person's interests, allowing for correction of data the AI used, and the right to challenge discriminatory inferences made by AI systems.

Ultimately, the Bill recognises the importance of both robust human oversight and transparency in the deployment of high-risk artificial intelligence systems. To mitigate potential harms to individual rights and freedoms, the Bill mandates rigorous human supervision, requiring supervisors to possess a comprehensive understanding of system capabilities, critically evaluate outputs, and retain the authority to override or halt AI operations. The Bill also establishes a public database containing impact assessments for high-risk AI systems, managed by the competent authority. This transparency initiative aims to foster public scrutiny and accountability, enabling informed discourse about the deployment and potential consequences of these technologies while also protecting commercial and industrial secrets. In essence, these provisions aim to strike a balance between innovation and ethical considerations, ensuring that high-risk AI is deployed responsibly and with due regard for individual rights and public safety.

INDIA'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

India approved the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in 2018.[44] The Strategy promotes AI as a catalyst for socio-economic advancement and recognises the need for future regulatory interventions. The document examines the principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency, highlighting the potential for algorithmic bias and discriminatory outcomes. Similarly, it emphasises the need for data protection frameworks to address privacy concerns arising from large-scale data collection and processing.

The Indian Strategy anticipates AI driving economic expansion through intelligent automation of complex tasks, enhancing human roles and capital efficiency via labour and capital augmentation, and propelling innovation across various sectors through innovation. Beyond the economic sphere, the Strategy recognises that AI offers significant opportunities for social development and inclusive growth, positioning it as a tool well-suited to address India's unique challenges. The document identifies key areas where AI can make a transformative impact, including improving widespread access to quality healthcare, particularly by overcoming geographical barriers; fostering financial inclusion by extending formal financial products to previously excluded populations; providing farmers with real-time advisory services to boost productivity; and aiding the development of smart, efficient cities and infrastructure necessary to manage rapid urbanisation effectively.

India's national strategy proposes a simplified two-tier framework for promoting AI research, moving beyond earlier complex models. The first tier comprises Centres of Research Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (COREs), which will focus on fundamental, core AI research. COREs are tasked with generating new knowledge, exploring next-generation technologies, developing essential infrastructure tools, investigating new AI architectures, and ultimately acting as the primary technology feeders for the International Centres for Transformational AI (ICTAIs), which focus on application-based research, technology development, deployment, and commercialisation, functioning as industry-led initiatives. [45] ICTAIs will address high-level national challenges, translate research breakthroughs into marketable products, and accelerate the adoption of AI in domains crucial to social progress (see Figure 5). Finally, the Centre for Sustainable Technologies (CST) is also envisioned to address financing, monitor social impact, ensure global competitiveness, foster international collaborations, and manage knowledge transfer.

Crucially, the national strategy emphasizes that ethical considerations, robust privacy protection, and stringent security measures must be integral components of AI development and deployment. While acknowledging that existing human systems are not without flaws, the approach demands significantly higher standards for AI systems due to their potential scale and impact.

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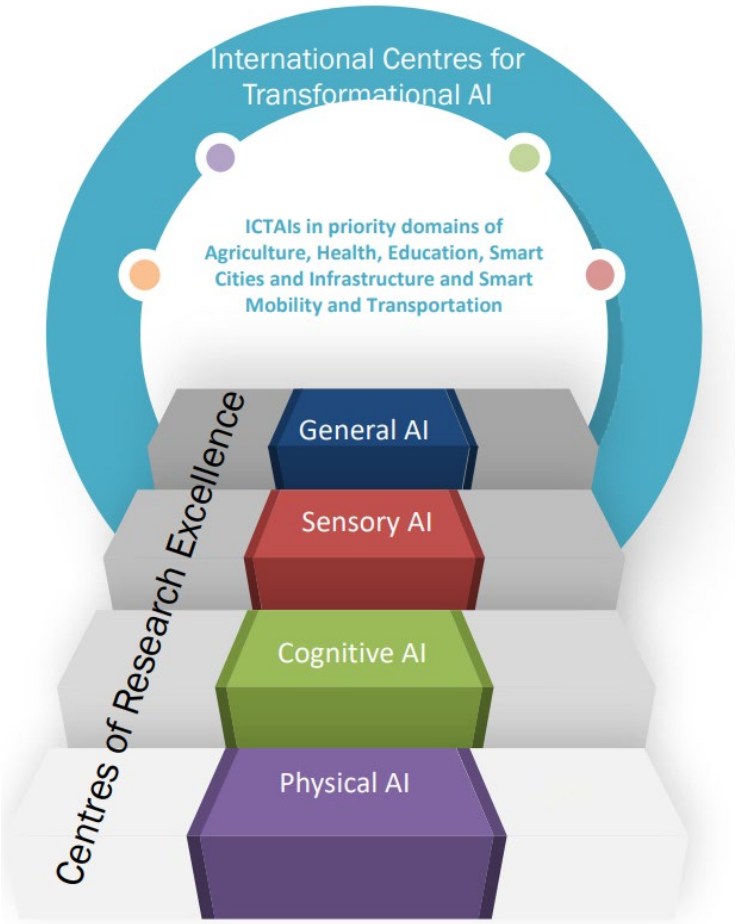
[44] See: India, NITI Aayog, National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (New Delhi, June 2018) at https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-03/National-Strategy-for-Artificial-Intelligence.pdf (accessed April 1, 2025).

[45] India, Future Networks (FN) Division, Telecommunication Engineering Centre, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policies in India - A Status Paper" (New Delhi, August 2020). Available from https://www.tec.gov.in/pdf/Studypaper/AI%20Policies%20in%20India%20A%20status%20Paper%20final.pdf (accessed 2 June 2025).

Figure 5.- Integration of COREs and ICTAIs



Source: National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2018)

The National Strategy also addresses ethical concerns and the need to identify and mitigate biases inherent in data that AI systems may learn and amplify. It also requires pursuing greater transparency in how AI systems arrive at decisions, which should include facilitating an understanding among users. It proposes the establishment of Ethics Councils at research centres to support the definition of standard practices. The Strategy also recognises the concerns originating from the use of AI in the right to privacy, ranging from data collection without informed consent and inappropriate usage to the risks of profiling and discrimination. The Strategy proposes a comprehensive approach to deal with AI and privacy issues, encompassing strong legal protections, industry-specific rules, adherence to global standards, developer accountability, investment in privacy-enhancing technologies, and public education on data rights.[46]

Likewise, the IndiaAI Mission is a comprehensive national initiative launched in March 2024 with a budget of approximately $1.24 billion.[47] The mission is structured around seven interconnected pillars designed to create a holistic AI ecosystem. A foundational pillar is the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, which aims to establish a large-scale AI computing infrastructure

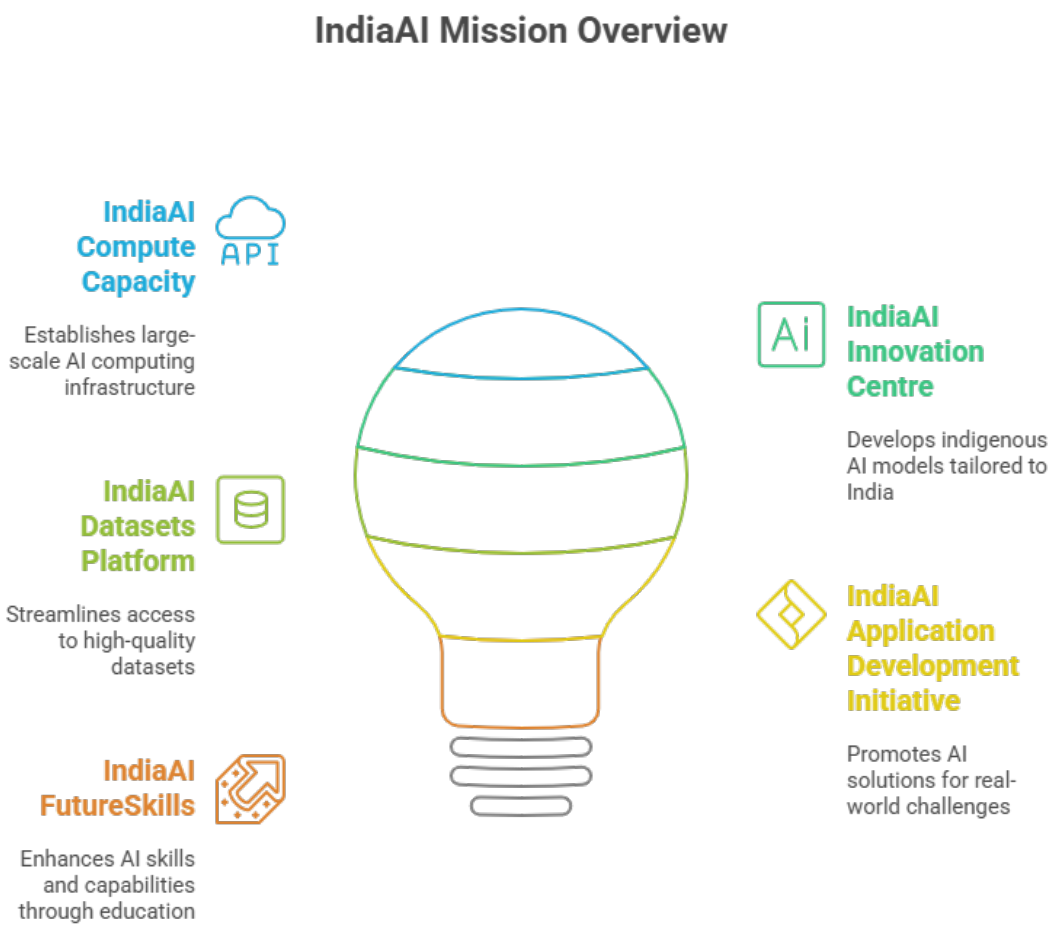
[46] India, NITI Aayog, National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence.
[47] India, Press Information Bureau, "Cabinet Approves Over Rs 10,300 Crore for IndiaAI Mission, will Empower AI Startups and Expand Compute Infrastructure Access", 7 March 2024. Available from https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2012375 (accessed 24 June 2024).

of over 10,000 GPUs through public-private partnerships (PPPs) to democratize access for startups, researchers, and academic institutions.

Complementing this is the IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), tasked with spearheading the development of indigenous foundational models, including Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) tailored to India's linguistic diversity and critical sectors like healthcare and agriculture. These developmental efforts are fueled by the IndiaAI Datasets Platform (AIKosha), a national platform designed to streamline access to high-quality, non-personal datasets essential for training AI models.

For achieving these objectives, the IndiaAI Application Development Initiative promotes the creation of AI solutions for real-world challenges, with problem statements often sourced from government ministries. The ecosystem is based on human capital, focusing on enhancing skills and capabilities through the IndiaAI FutureSkills pillar, which aims to build a robust AI talent pipeline by expanding education and establishing Data and AI Labs in smaller cities.

Figure 6.- Elements of IndiaAI Mission



Source: South Centre, 2025

The proposed solution involves the establishment of a multifaceted legal data protection framework guided by principles such as consent, accountability, and data minimisation. Sector-specific regulations would complement this framework, as well as encourage developers to adopt ethical standards, promote self-regulation tools, invest in privacy-preserving AI research techniques, and conduct comprehensive public awareness campaigns

regarding data rights. In addition, it considers the security and safety of AI systems, focusing on accountability rather than liability alone. A proposed framework includes using a negligence test for damages, establishing safe harbours for developers following best practices, creating mechanisms for fair apportionment of liability, and requiring proof of actual harm for legal action.

CONCLUSION

The global race for AI control, underscored by recent international summits from Bletchley to Paris, presents a complex scenario that balances fostering rapid innovation with ensuring fairness, safety, and inclusivity. While major powers like the United States and the European Union champion divergent regulatory paradigms – one prioritising market-led dynamism and deregulation, the other a human-centric, risk-based approach – developing countries find themselves navigating this increasingly fragmented landscape. Facing significant hurdles related to digital infrastructure, data access, financial resources, and technical capacity, these developing countries run the risk of being marginalised or having external governance models imposed that fail to address their specific contexts and priorities.

However, developing countries are resisting passive roles in shaping the future of AI. For example, the G77 and China have voiced the need of an equitable global AI order, including meaningful participation in governance structures, substantial capacity building, accessible technology transfer, and the creation of open-source systems tailored to local needs. The call for international cooperation, echoed by UN Secretary-General Guterres and enshrined in resolutions such as General Assembly Resolution A/78/311, underscores the imperative to bridge the digital divide and ensure that AI serves as a tool for inclusive growth and sustainable development across the Global South rather than exacerbating existing inequalities.

Furthermore, developing nations are demonstrating considerable agency by establishing their own AI strategies and governance frameworks. Examples include the African Union's Continental AI Strategy, with its 'People-centred' and 'Local First' focus, Brazil's rights-based AI Bill, which highlights human oversight, and India's National Strategy, which fosters ethical research ecosystems (COREs/ICTAIs) for socio-economic benefit. These initiatives reveal a commitment to deploying AI in ways that align specifically with national contexts, human rights, and development objectives, thus offering significant alternative models to those of the US and EU. The establishment of UN-led initiatives, such as the proposed Global Dialogue on AI Governance and the Independent International Scientific Panel, can serve as inclusive platforms where the voices and concerns of developing countries can be adequately represented and addressed.

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these mechanisms hinges on ensuring genuine participation, translating discussions into concrete actions, and securing adequate resources for capacity-building initiatives. The journey towards a globally governed AI requires moving beyond the competitive dynamics of a few dominant players towards genuine international solidarity. Ultimately, successfully navigating the AI universe demands a collective global effort that transcends geopolitical competition and acknowledges the diverse realities across the world.

For developing countries, the challenge is not merely to catch up technologically but to shape an AI framework that aligns with their developmental aspirations and shared human values. The experiences and proactive strategies emerging from the Global South should not be taken as mere examples but as essential contributions towards building a future where artificial intelligence truly benefits all of humanity, fostering equity and shared prosperity rather than deepening global divides.

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